### THE

# CLASSICAL WEEKLY

VOL. 40, NO. 16

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WHOLE NO. 1064

THE DESTRUCTION OF ANCIENT ROME (Sanford)

ABSTRACTS OF ARTICLES

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## THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY

Published weekly (on Monday) except in weeks in which there is an academic vacation or Armistice Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas, New Year's Day, Washington's Birthday, Easter, or Memorial Day. A volume contains approximately twenty-two issues.

Owner and Publisher: The Classical Association of the Atlantic States. Place of Publication: Bennett Hall, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia 4, Pennsylvania. Printed by The Science Press Printing Company, Lancaster, Pa.

Edward H. Heffner, Editor, Bennett Hall, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia 4, Pennsylvania. Franklin B. Krauss, Secretary and Treasurer, The Pennsylvania State College, Box 339, State College, Pennsylvania, Associate Editor, Wm. C. McDermott; Contributing Editors: Charles T. Murphy, J. C. Plumpe.

Price, \$2.00 per volume in the Western Hemisphere; elsewhere \$2.50. All subscriptions run by the volume. Single numbers: to subscribers 15 cents, to others 25 cents prepaid (otherwise 25 cents and 35 cents). If affidavit to invoice is required, sixty cents must be added to the subscription price. For residents of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, or the District of Columbia, a subscription to THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY (or, alternatively, to the Classical Journal) is included in the membership fee of The Classical Association of the Atlantic States, whose members are also entitled to The Classical Outlook and The Classical Journal at special prices in combinations available from the Secretary.

Entered as second-class matter November 7, 1945, at the Post Office at Philadelphia, Pa., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in the Act of February 28, 1925, authorized October 14, 1938.

Volume 40 contains issues dated: October 14, 21, 28; November 4, 18; December 2, 9, 16 (1946); January 6, 13, 20, 27; February 3, 10, 24; March 3, 10, 24; April 14, 21; May 5, 12 (1947).

### THE DESTRUCTION OF ANCIENT ROME

'Rome was not built in a day,' and its ruin, like its building, was the work of many centuries. A school child once came to her teacher to complain about a textbook that had been given to her. 'It's not all here,' she said, 'the Roman shape isn't in it.' Her teacher finally discovered that the missing page was a picture of the Roman Forum. Older students of Roman antiquities have long regretted our loss of the Roman shape. Too often modern readers take for granted the ruined condition of ancient monuments; either we think this condition is the manifest destiny of old buildings, or we say vaguely that Rome was ruined by the barbarian invasions, a blessed phrase that covers a multitude of sins against antiquity. The classic response of the charwoman in London to her husband's bewilderment about the condition of the Parthenon marbles, which made him ask, 'Didn't they ever finish their statues in them days?' was, 'Don't show your higherance, 'Enery, 'twas dusting done it.' This may serve well enough to account for the ruin of ancient sculpture, but not for that of the Coliseum and the Forum. Most Roman buildings were, to be sure, partially lost to sight through lack of dusting. We all recall the old custom of sprinkling a handful of dust on a dead body in token of burial. Rome has thus performed her own funeral rites, as any great city left with a scanty and careless population is bound to do, by the accumulation of dirt in the streets and valleys, as well as by the crumbling

of neglected bricks and mortar. A young tourist once asked me why the Romans built all their important buildings so far below the level of the street. R

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The Romans of the 15th century, following the example of their ancestors, who attributed the loss of early records to the Gallic sack of the city, said that the Goths destroyed the old buildings, and they sought to prove it by displaying peculiar hatchets found in the old vineyards, with a cutting edge to cleave the shields of the inhabitants, and a blunt side to batter the antiquities. Modern students will hardly accept this picture of Gothic implements of war, nor can we accept the comfortable doctrine that any edifice erected two thousand years ago has a right to be ruined—the Romans of the Empire built too well for that. Their architects, profiting by the occasional failures of their forbears, built monuments more enduring than bronze. An English pilgrim of the 8th century expressed the faith of his time in the eternity of Rome, two centuries after the close of the Gothic Wars:

Small wert thou, Rome, when thou createdst me, Smaller shalt be, if e'er thou cast me down. While stands the Coliseum, Rome stands too, When falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall, And when Rome falls, with it shall fall the world.

In the Middle Ages, as Graf has said, Rome was not only the past, but the present and the future, not a museum, but a living and changing reality. Thus both mediaeval and renaissance Romans thought it quite natural to praise eternal

Rome with their tongues and despoil its mortal remains with their hands. Sometimes the adaptation of ancient sites to current uses contributed to their preservation. On the other hand, the shaky condition of overhanging ruins sometimes threatened the lives of the people so much that they had to tear them down. Self-protection is an eternal necessity, even in an eternal city.

Throughout the Republic, the Romans learned how to erect buildings that would survive despite earthquakes, fire, and civil riots. By the early years of the Empire, they had achieved this end. Consider the Temple of Concord. Built to commemorate the end of civil strife early in the 4th century, after the passage of the Licinian Laws, the temple was in ruins by the end of the 2nd century. After the Gracchan revolution was suppressed, the Senate ordered the temple rebuilt. Just after it was completed, a new inscription was found cut beneath the official dedication of the conservative consul Opimius, who had charge of the building: 'Discord has reared this temple of Concord.' The new building lasted less than a century, and the third temple, built by Tiberius during the Augustan Peace, still stood in the 13th century. Little remains of it today.

In the 4th century artists already looked back with admiration to the great days of the early centuries of the Empire. Then, too, Constantine's famous decision introduced the factor of Christian hostility to pagan temples. Christian guards were actually set for a time to protect the temple treasures from Christian mobs. But the poet Ausonius still described Rome as 'first among the cities, the home of the gods, golden Rome.' The imperial edicts of the 4th and early part of the 5th century strictly forbade sacrifices, burning of incense, or any form of pagan worship in the temples, and in some cases forbade men to enter them, to loiter about them, or even to gaze at them. A few, however, like the temple of Antoninus and Faustina in the Forum, were preserved through the ages by becoming Christian churches. An edict of A.D. 383 provided for keeping open such temples as contained statues of artistic worth, with due precautions against their use for pagan sacrifices. Other edicts provided that the buildings should be kept in good condition, though altars and other pagan paraphernalia were to be destroyed. Some temples were turned to public use, especially those in which games and circus performances could be held. In A.D. 435 the emperors ordered that all pagan temples, 'if any now remained unharmed,' should be destroyed, but this edict was fortunately never put into effect. There was, of course, no reason for Christian hostility to the secular buildings of the Empire, and it is clear that the greater and more solid structures suffered little at this period. Neglect at least preserved them from 'restoration.' A fifth-century bishop wrote:

'Whoever goes to the Apostle Peter must needs pass by the Tomb of the Emperor Hadrian, a building of marvellous size and beauty. Yet it would never enter anyone's mind to say, 'Let us visit the emperor's tomb.'' People bestow on it a mere passing glance, and hasten onward to the Tomb of the Fisherman.'

The full tide of the barbarian invasions began with the 5th century. Alaric's Visigoths were in the city three days; Gaiseric's Vandals fourteen. Both came for booty and glory, not for destruction. Why should they have thought that they could destroy Rome, or why should they have wished to do so? They, too, believed in its eternity, however much damage their looting might cause. But men who survived the Gothic sack of the city remembered it as Claudian had described it shortly before, with its towering palaces, the basilicas, temples, and ramparts that belonged to the immortal gods, and, above all, the Capitoline Temple on its Tarpeian Heights, its brazen towers, fluttering banners, and arches of triumph with their splendid spoils:

'The glare of metal strikes upon the sight,
And sparkling gold o'erpowers with dazzling light.'

It was this glare of metal, especially the gilded tiles of the roof of the Capitoline Temple, and its gilded statues and capitals, that gave Rome its epithet of golden, *urbs aurea*. Even in Claudian's day the glitter of the Capitol seemed tarnished to less optimistic beholders, for three years before the coming of Alaric, St. Jerome wrote to a friend: 'The golden Capitol is filled with mud, and the Roman temples are all defiled

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with dust and cobwebs. . . . ' A few years later, Rutilius Namatianus came from Gaul to Rome for his consulship, and to his provincial eyes the city was still a dream of golden glory. Forty years after his visit the Vandals stripped the golden tiles from the Capitol.

Yet no great harm was done to Roman monuments in either the Gothic or the Vandal raids. Our definition of Vandalism has tragically changed since then. Even the loss of statues was comparatively slight, for a century later, when the population of Rome had sadly dwindled, one man commented that the marble citizens were more numerous than those of flesh and blood! When we consider the number of statues that adorned a single basilica in its prime, we are not surprised at this statement.

A more lasting cause of destruction began with the use of lesser edifices, despite imperial prohibitions, for building materials. It seemed easier to take stones from structures already neglected than to quarry fresh stone. But it was fatally easy to take stone also from buildings in good condition. Rome for the next thousand years and more was a quarry for the general use.

Theodoric and his Ostrogoths occupied Italy toward the end of the 5th century. Though his own capital was at Ravenna, he issued many instructions for the protection of Roman monuments. Rome was already in some sense a museum, cherishing relics of the past that had lost their living functions. When danger threatened, some of the chief treasures were buried or walled up for protection, to be rediscovered, perhaps, in modern times. Statues of bronze, the hundreds of ancient Romans who lined the streets and fora, were fatally valuable to men who cared nothing for art or antiquity. So Theodoric provided night watchmen to protect them from thieves who coveted the precious bronze. These men patrolled the streets, listening for the clang of metal that cried aloud for rescue when struck by the robbers' tools. This has been suggested as the origin of a story current in the Middle Ages, that the statues of the provinces on the Capitol rang bells whenever a revolution broke out in the lands that they represented.

Theodoric also wished to restore ruined buildings; he offered to help the Romans if they would contribute toward the work; he called on the residents of the Lucrine port to furnish a quota of 25,000 tiles a year, 'that thus we may deserve the thanks of the ancient kings, to whose works we have restored immortal youth.' He ordered the farmers to bring in field stones for rebuilding the walls, even if they did not receive the full market price. 'Let nothing,' he wrote, 'lie useless which may redound to the beauty of the City. Let your Illustrious Magnificence, therefore, cause the blocks of marble which are everywhere lying about in ruin to be wrought up into the walls by the hands of the workmen whom I am sending. Be sure to use only those stones that have actually fallen from public buildings, as we do not intend to appropriate private property, even for the glorification of the City.' But when he ordered the City Prefect to send from the Pincian Hill to Ravenna any marbles that were lying useless, the danger was obvious. Once the stones were taken, no one could tell whether they had really fallen or not, but the materials sent to Ravenna would be clear evidence of the zeal of the officials at Rome. Yet Theodoric stayed the process of ruin more than he furthered it. He repaired the sewers, not without rhetoric; 'Hence may the greatness of Rome be inferred. What other city can be compared with her in her heights when even her lowest depths are incomparable?" There should be nothing sordid or mediocre in Rome, 'since it is praised beyond all other cities throughout the world.' A city architect was appointed 'for the necessary repairs to the forest of walls and the population of statues which make up Rome, surpassing even the seven wonders of the world.' Among his undertakings was the restoration of Pompey's Theater in the Campus Martius, which for the second time was sinking under its own weight. Thus Rome at the end of the 5th century might have struck a fair balance of gains and losses, were it not for the dangerous precedents that had been established.

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The 6th century brought greater ruin. In the eighteen years of Justinian's wars to recover Italy from the Ostrogoths, Rome was captured

and plundered five times; every time a large part of the population took refuge elsewhere, and many never returned. Every time the walls were broken down in various places, to be rebuilt as soon as possible for defensive purposes, and it is only since 1870 that the walls built by Aurelian in the 3rd century, and so often breached and repaired, have become an impressive relic and not a stern necessity. This change in turn has led to the destruction of the greater part of their course, to make room for the traffic of the modern city. Every time that Rome was besieged, the aqueducts were cut, in order to end the siege sooner. Every time famine raged, and the mediaeval motto so popular on the margins of Latin manuscripts may well have had its origin at this time; in its simpler form it runs:

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Ruit Regnum Romae Ferro, Flamma, Fame; Pater Patriae Profectus Est. 'The Realm of Rome is Ruined, by Sword, Flames and Famine; the Father of the Fatherland has Fled.'

To defend the city from the Goths, the Romans tore down the great statues from Hadrian's tomb, and hurled them on the heads of the enemy. But there were more Goths than statues. The historian who described the Gothic Wars made this comment on the city itself:

'Although the Romans have long endured barbarian rule, they have preserved as far as possible the buildings of their city, and the greater part of its adornments; which, owing to their own intrinsic greatness and excellence, will defy time and neglect.'

Much has been made of the cutting of the aqueducts at this time. The necessities of war dictated cutting off the water-supply of the city, but the damage thus done might, under better auspices, have been repaired. However, the small population that remained after the wars needed less water, and had less energy for reconstruction than their predecessors. During the following centuries the proprietors of the suburban villas used the unrepaired aqueducts as a source of building materials. The resulting change in Roman habits led a modern historian to remark: 'The sight of Rome, holy but dirty, will exert a very different and far less civilized influence on

the nations from beyond the Alps who come to worship at her shrine.' In this case cleanliness and godliness were not combined.

But if the Romans had too little water from one source they had too much from another. The Tiber is an unruly river, and the old commission for its care had long since lapsed. In 589, so Gregory of Tours tells us: 'The Tiber overflowed the city to such an extent that the ancient buildings fell in, and the granaries of the city were destroyed.' The famous floodmarks in the Campus Martius show how often such floods occurred in later centuries, and some of us, in spite of modern care of the riverbanks, have seen Rome far too wet in its lower portions, and far too dirty, whether holy or not, in the higher stretches of the Janiculum, through the unhappy combination of flood and breaks in an aqueduct. In the 6th century, and later, floods were often the signal for an outbreak of the plague. Thus the natural enemies of Rome in the Middle Ages were well established.

After the Gothic Wars, the Senate was not even mentioned in the city records, though the old formula SPQR still occurs. The Middle Ages had fully begun for Rome. Imperial connections lapsed until the transfer of the Empire to the Franks, while the Popes ruled in the city.

In 663 a Roman emperor visited Rome, her first imperial guest in two hundred years. It was an ill-omened visit for the city, as Paul the Deacon described it in his Lombard History, for after the emperor's visit of state to St. Peter's he spent twelve days stripping the ancient buildings of all their metal ornaments, including the bronze tiles from the roof of the Pantheon, whose rededication to the Virgin Mary was of no avail. The Pantheon is still majestic, but its old glory is gone. An elegy on Rome, written for this imperial visit, laments the fall of the city, and its subjection to the slaves of slaves. Flourishing Constantinople was the new Rome, while old Rome was falling, its buildings and walls alike in ruins.

Better times were coming, and a Frankish emperor was to prove more gracious than the Roman. Pippin's campaigns checked the raids of the Lombards, though not before they ravaged the Campagna and plundered the Catacombs. Pope Hadrian restored the walls and towers of the city, using material from many ancient buildings, but he partly compensated for this by restoring some of the aqueducts as well, since only that of Trajan, which furnished water-power for the mills, had been in use since the Gothic Wars. Descriptions of Rome during the reign of Charlemagne, whose coronation marked the beginning of new imperial dignities for the West, show that most of the ancient buildings, though injured by fire, flood, and earthquake, and by the settling of their foundations, especially those in the Campus Martius, still stood, and that the Romans could still walk through the city under the grateful shelter of the ancient porticoes. Alcuin, poring over the Classical poets, however, wrote:

'Rome, once the head of the world, the world's pride, the city of gold,

Stands now a pitiful ruin, the wreck of its glory of old.'

To Christian pilgrims it was still Roma caput mundi, the head of the world, and when travellers from the north stood on Monte Mario and caught their first glimpse of the city, they sang:

'O Roma nobilis, orbis et domina, cunctarum urbium excellentissima—

a noble hymn best known through Symonds' translation, of which I quote the first verse:

O Rome illustrious, of the world empress, Over all cities thou queen in thy godliness, Red with the roseate blood of the martyrs, and White with the lilies of virgins at God's right hand! Welcome we sing to thee, ever we bring to thee, Blessings, and pay to thee praise for eternity.

Soon a new enemy appeared, the Saracens from Spain. There was little resistance possible against their raids on the Campagna and the city itself; the Leonine City, residence of the Popes, was walled for protection against them, and the countryside lay desolate. A worse enemy grew up within the city, when the noble factions began their endless civil wars, seeking control of the Papaey, and using the proletarians as pawns

in their contests. Rome again had a Senate, the civic nobility rejoiced in their power, and the late republican precedents of civil war were renewed. The fall of the Carolingian Empire meant a period without much foreign intervention, and further abuse of the old buildings by the Romans themselves. Rome 'scarce remembered Rome'; for centuries the city, as Gregorovius says, 'resembled a vast limekiln, into which the costliest marble was thrown and thus reduced to mortar. . . . Thus the Romans sacked and destroyed ancient Rome; they cut it and broke it to pieces; they burned and transformed it, yet never wholly swept it way.' There were limekilns in the Campus Martius, in the Forum, and especially in the Basilica Julia, and that once stately building served the limeburners till nothing remained but its foundations. Calcarius, a limeburner, or a man living near the limekilns. became a popular surname in the city. The basilicas, reduced to their foundations, served as ropewalks. Contemporary descriptions in the guide books written for pilgrims list the great ruins of temples and imperial for indiscriminately as palaces; the baths and circuses are usually called theaters. A new use was found for old buildings in this age of civil strife, as towers and fortifications for the nobles in their wars with one another. The Crescentii built a fortress in the ruins of the Baths of Constantine; the Frangipani fortified the Arch of Titus, the Palatine, and the Coliseum. Every arch, every strong building, every bridge and tomb were fortified by some noble family or by a bishop or abbot. This really protected the ancient masonry as long as the fortifications stood. All Rome took sides in the conflict of Empire and Papacy at the end of the 11th century; the Capitol was besieged as the stronghold of the Corsi, and the emperor took up his temporary residence on the Capi-These twenty years of civil war toline Hill. wrought the worst destruction since the Gothic Wars. Now the great porticoes were ruined, the Palatine and the Capitoline were laid waste, the buildings of the Campus Martius were burned. Close on these calamities came the sack and burning of the city by Robert Guiscard, the Norman, which the historian Biondo in the 15th century

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considered the chief cause of the ruin of the ancient monuments. Norman, imperial, and papal troops were far better equipped for the work of destruction than their Gothic and Vandal predecessors, had more personal animus in their conflicts, and were aided by the damage wrought by nature and by man in the intervening centuries. Much of the population now moved from the Caelian and the Aventine Hills to the Campus Martius, hereafter the chief residential section, its stately old buildings crowded by the mean dwellings of the populace.

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A new danger soon threatened. Too many foreign dignitaries visited the city for political or pious reasons. They were erecting great churches all over Europe, as beautiful as their workmen's skill and the available materials permitted. So they took from Rome anything they fancied. Suger, the great abbot of St. Denis, wished that he could put the columns of the Roman baths on shipboard, for his new church. Others were not content with mere wishing. Many of the old buildings were made over by the Popes to churches or to private persons for various uses. One man had half the arch of Septimius Severus, while the church of SS. Sergius and Bacchus had the rest. The passageway of the arch made convenient space for shops. But the walls of the city and some aqueducts were kept in repair, a senator restored the Cestian bridge, and in 1162 the Senate took measures to preserve Trajan's column, 'that it should remain as it stands to the honor of the Roman people, as long as the world endures.'

Civil wars continued, and the towers of the Frangipani multiplied. Every imperial visit brought fresh conflicts. The peaceful visitors to the city, the pilgrims, were more and more curious about ancient Rome, and many guidebooks were written to explain its marvelous antiquities. The information which they professed to give was more often based on fancy than on fact, but they told the pilgrims what they wished to know. There was a real, though ignorant, antiquarian interest back of them, and though most of our present sources for a wider knowledge were then unknown, the gradually increasing civic con-

science of the Roman people, and their strong nationalist feeling, now reviving against great odds, were closely associated in their minds with the ancient city. So the compiler of the *Mirabilia* took much pride in his task:

'These and many other temples of the emperors, consuls, senators, and prefects existed in this golden city in pagan times, as we read in the ancient annals, and have seen with our own eyes. How they shone resplendent with gold, silver, bronze, ivory, and precious stones, we have endeavored as far as we were able to describe for the benefit of posterity in this book.'

For the pilgrim demanded a view not only of the Christian city that lay before him, but also of the golden Rome that could now be more clearly discerned with the imagination than the eye. In the *Mirabilia* we have the first attempt to map out the topography and buildings of the city, and for all its fantasy, omissions, and errors, one is struck by the degree of preservation of the ancient buildings that it indicates.

Yet much, as we have seen, had been lost, and especially in recent times. Among those who rightly looked on the city as the mere shadow of its once mighty name, was Bernard, the author of the poem *De contemptu mundi*, from which so many of our hymns have been taken:

'These are the words I must speak and must write, "Rome, thou art ended.

Thy walls and good customs uprooted, thou hast fallen.
O glorious city, thou fallest, prostrate as thou once
wast exalted.

The higher thou wast of old, the lower and more shaken art thou now."

These are the words I must write and must speak, "Rome, thou hast perished."

The walls give back the echo, "Rome, thou art fallen." (To be continued)

EVA MATTHEWS SANFORD

SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE

### ABSTRACTS OF ARTICLES

Prepared under the supervision of Professor Charles T. Murphy of Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey.

HISTORY. SOCIAL STUDIES

LE GALL, Joël. La Mort de Jugurtha. Plutarch's account (Marius 12) of death by starvation, highly suspect; all other testimony affirms or implies his immediate

execution by strangling, in accordance with usual kind of execution in carcere. Source of Plutarch's story perhaps one C. Piso, who is credited with a dramatic and unlikely version of death of Marius; political animus against Marius probable in a Piso. Certain caution necessary in accepting Plutarch's dramatic episodes, especially where political bias in source is likely.

RPh 18 (1944) 94-100 (Taylor)

LAWLER, LILLIAN B. The Dance of the Ancient Mariners. Merchant sailors used to stop at Delos to perform ritualistic dances. These were done to insure the safety of their ships and probably date back to the sea-power of the Minoans. The dances were of various types: 'labyrinth', or wandering dances, a ritual beating dance, and dances involving the biting of the trunk of a sacred tree. A similar dance of the Helots was probably derived from this same source and was learned from the Cretans by the pre-Dorian inhabitants of the Peloponnese.

TAPA 75 (1944) 20-33 (Bourne)

Lerat, L. Antikyra de Locride. Existence of this Antikyra inferred solely from Strabo and Livy; no epigraphical evidence or mention in lists of Locrian cities. Strabo's account of famous Phocian city mentions only one other Antikyra, that near Octa (IX p. 418); his account of Octan city contains only mention of Locrian Antikyra (IX p. 434); error in latter passage more plausible than omission in former, in view of context; Livy's reference (26.26) generally acknowledged to be error and Phocian Antikyra the actual city concerned: his language makes supposition of two neighboring cities unlikely. Geographical confusion regarding small neighboring states not surprising or uncommon.

RPh 19 (1945) 12-8 (Taylor)

Male, Gertrude. The Date of Justinian's Edict XIII. The edict, which directs the reorganization of the administration of Egypt, was issued in A.D. 553/4 rather than in 538/9. Discussion of P. Lond. V, 1708 and P. Masp. I, 67002.

Byz 16 (1942-3) 135-41 (Downey)

Martin, Victor and Denis Van Berchem. Le Panis Aedium d'Alexandrie. Evidence that regular state contribution of food, panis aedium, constituted part of income of owners of large houses in Alexandria, income inseparable from land and house itself. Origin of practice in Constantinople, through Constantine's effort to build splendid capital. Such income in food offered as incentive to builders of domus type of house, as opposed to insula. Spread from Constantinople to Rome; evidence for Alexandria in two papyrus documents here analyzed and interpreted.

RPh 16 (1942) 5-21 (Taylor)

ROBERT, LOUIS. Les Ethniques d'Antikyra. Form  ${}^{\prime}$ A $\nu au \kappa 
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ho s$  indicates origin in Antikyra of Phocis, form

'Αντικυρίτης the Oetean Antikyra. Confirmation in epigraphical evidence.

RPh 19 (1945) 19-20 (Taylor)

Robinson, C. A., Jr. Alexander the Great and Parmenio. The execution of Parmenio, generally considered the darkest spot in Alexander's career, was actually in accord with Macedonian law, though, had Alexander wished, he could doubtless have saved Parmenio. The alternative explanations in Arrian 3.26 are to be ascribed to Arrian himself, not to Ptolemy. There is, further, some evidence that Parmenio had become dangerously unreliable, or even disobedient.

AJA 49 (1945) 422-4 (Walton)

SCHWARTZ, JACQUES. Recherches sur les Dernières Années du Règne d'Auguste (4-14). From 11 to 14: Elaborate analysis of Dio, Velleius, Suetonius, Ovid, Praenestine Fasti, coins, and inscriptions. Conclusions: Ovid's exile in 9, not 8; Varus' defeat in 10, not 9, dedication of Iustitia Augusta in Jan. of 13, new powers accorded to Tiberius and Illyrian triumph in 13. From 4 to 10: Velleius, Dio, and problems of Pannonian and German campaigns. Tiberius's departure for Germany in 4, end of Pannonian campaign in 8, premature vote of triumph, solemn entrance into Rome in 9; Vienna cameo depicts this entrance, not the triumph of 13. Sources: Aufidius Bassus principal source of Dio for these years, epitome of Bassus, source of Suetonius; anti-Tiberian bias in this part unlikely and such detail in Suetonius due to another source. Problem of extent of Bassus' work, whether to A.D. 31 or 45, and of Suetonius' dependence on Livy or Bassus for years covered by both.

RPh 19 (1945) 21-90 (Taylor)

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